

25X1

Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

October 1968

RUMANIA: THE MAVERICK SATELLITE

Rumania has received increasing publicity as the Soviet Satellite that is not quite a Satellite. How it has succeeded in asserting many independent foreign policy positions, even in opposition to emphatic Soviet desires, has puzzled many observers and evoked the admiration of some for its daring. In the present fateful period when the Soviets have once again wielded the mailed fist by invading Czechoslovakia, Rumania has again displayed her independence by immediately condemning the invasion in very strong terms. However, as the fear grew that the Soviets would extend their military occupation beyond Czechoslovakia to include Rumania, the Rumanians modified their public position to less obstreperous opposition to the Soviet action. But, thus far, there is no compelling evidence that Rumania will relinquish her cherished role as the maverick Satellite.

Flirting with the West

The catalogue of Rumania's independent foreign policy positions is truly impressive.

West Germany

Bucharest recognized West Germany (the USSR's bete noire) in January 1967, becoming the first Warsaw Pact nation (other than the Soviet Union) to violate Soviet Bloc policy of not entering into full diplomatic relations with West Germany until such time as East Germany was recognized formally by Bonn. Rumania argued that since Moscow has been exchanging ambassadors with Bonn since 1955, she should be free to do the same in her own self-interest. The logic of the argument may indeed be unassailable, but the fact is that no other Satellite has ventured to act on the same kind of logic. Czechoslovakia's attempt to establish slightly closer relations with Bonn was among the factors contributing to the Soviet decision to invade that unfortunate land.

Israel

Rumania is the only member of the Soviet bloc that refused to condemn Israel or to break relations with her after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. By following a self-serving neutralist policy in this matter, Rumania is consequently the only communist country now having diplomatic relations with both the United Arab Republic and Israel. Moreover, Bucharest reportedly gave El Al (the Israeli airline) tentative approval in May 1968 to set up a direct air link between Rumania and the United States sometime in 1969. Among its lesser acts of unorthodox diplomacy, Rumania became the first country in Eastern Europe to recognize the Greek military junta that seized power 21 April 1967 and the first to establish consular relations with Spain.

The World Bank

In May 1968, Rumania was reported once again exploring the possibilities of joining the World Bank, which requires, as a precondition, membership in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The significance of this initiative is that IMF membership requires certain commitments, among others revelation of the true status of the national economy. The Soviet Bloc countries have been unwilling to make such a commitment. And their position is understandable: there is much too much dirty linen to hide. (The Communist mania for secrecy undoubtedly also plays its role.) Members must make full disclosure of nearly all economic facts, ranging from the size of gold reserves through foreign trade to domestic budget and monetary developments. Membership in the fund provides access to rapid help when a nation is in difficulty with its balance of payments, a problem plaguing some of the Eastern European countries. Fund membership also involves an eventual commitment to a fixed exchange rate for the nation's currency. This could mean abandonment of the Communist countries' system of settlements with one another through the Eastern bloc's Council for Economic Assistance (Comecon), a condition the Soviets would hardly be likely to condone. At present, Yugoslavia is the only Communist country belonging to the IMF -- but Yugoslavia is not a member of Comecon.

The initiative may, however, have been merely a Rumanian ploy to gain leverage in economic negotiations with the Soviet Union or Comecon, particularly since Rumania has been vocal about the need for various reforms of Comecon. Moreover, Rumania's initial inquiry about possible World Bank membership occurred in 1964 and was apparently successfully exploited thereafter as a theoretically alternative course of action if Rumania's economic needs were not met by the Soviet bloc.

United States

In mid-June 1968, a 13-man Rumanian delegation -- including specialists in aerodynamics, chemistry, and nuclear physics -- made a three-week tour of major scientific institutions throughout the U.S. and became the first delegation from a Communist country to tour the space launch facilities at Cape Kennedy. The delegation was led by Dr. Alexandru Birladeanu, a vice premier of Rumania and the highest ranking East European communist official to accept an invitation from the U.S. Government since Yugoslav President Tito paid a state visit to the U.S.A. in 1963. He is also a member of the ruling presidium of the Rumanian Communist Party and Chairman of the National Council for Scientific Research. Dr. Birladeanu announced that a major purpose of the tour was to help "relax the international situation" and "strengthen U.S.-Rumanian friendship and understanding." The visit was capped by a Rumanian-U.S. agreement on a broad new program of scientific, technical and commercial co-operation.

France

President de Gaulle of France paid an official state visit to Rumania in mid-May 1968 -- the first chief of state of a western power to visit Communist Rumania. Agreement was reached not only on a joint economic and industrial commission, similar to the one created between France and the Soviet Union, but also on the reciprocal opening of libraries and scientific information centers in Paris and Bucharest. The French library will be the first Western reading room in Bucharest.

United Kingdom

British Minister of Technology Wedgwood Benn was in Bucharest in mid-June 1968 for talks with Dr. Birladeanu before his departure for the U.S. Probably as a result of these talks, which were concerned with Rumania's drive for higher scientific standards, Rumania became the first Communist nation to buy a nuclear research facility from the British firm, Fairey Engineering, Ltd. The firm announced its unique sale on 31 July 1968.

In May 1968, Rumania reportedly rejected Soviet offers of TU-134 jetliners and instead purchased six British jet airliners worth \$24 million and signed a contract for British spare parts, technical assistance and maintenance. Negotiations with the British are also said to be underway for a commercial aircraft assembly plant in Bucharest. Thus, Rumania, having previously bought only Russian commercial aircraft, has taken several more steps toward economic independence from the Soviet Union.

Declaration of Independence

These extraordinary manifestations of independence found their beginnings in Rumania's balking at the economic role prescribed for her by the Soviet Union in Comecon. Soviet designs for maintaining dominance of her satellites included plans for keeping them economically dependent on the USSR by various means, among them assigning specialized roles for each national economy which would tie them to the Soviet Union as the overall coordinator (controller) of the roles each should play. (These roles are described in Soviet parlance as "principles of the socialist international division of labor.") Rumania had been assigned the role of supplier of industrial raw materials and agricultural foodstuffs. However, the long-time Communist boss Gheorghiu Dej, who died in March 1965, unaccountably had other ideas and succeeded in maneuvering Khrushchev into a position wherein the latter had no choice but to accede to Dej's ambition to attain economic sovereignty by developing a variegated industrial economy with a prominent role given to domestic heavy industry (with the potential, since partially realized, of associating with the Western economic community).

Essentially, the Rumanians utilized the Sino-Soviet conflict of the late 1950's to gain a considerable degree of autonomy. Khrushchev, faced with the recalcitrance of the Chinese Communists, found that after

his loosening of the rigid, terroristic control of the Satellites he had to solicit their support rather than simply command it. Dej wisely chose to play the part of a mediator in the Sino-Soviet dispute and, being wooed by both parties to the dispute, was able to insist on the sovereignty of each communist state to decide on its own course, economically and otherwise. He rejected the economic role for Rumania projected in the grand Soviet scheme of economic subjection of its satellites. After a brief period of pressure, via propaganda and polemics (since the Soviets at the time, embroiled as they were with the Chinese, could hardly undertake more open methods of subjugation), the Soviets bowed to Rumanian desires in the hope of gaining the Rumanians' support in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

This victory for Rumanian independence was declared and codified in the Rumanian Party Central Committee resolution of April 1964, which declared "the principles of national independence and sovereignty, equal rights, mutual advantage, comradely assistance, non-interference in internal affairs, observance of territorial integrity and socialist internationalism ... form the immutable law ... of the entire world socialist system" and "the only basis for unity." While this may appear a pious repetition of an international Communist platitude, the Rumanians have invoked it pragmatically in explanation of their divergencies from the policies of the Soviet bloc and insisted successfully on its literal and practical implications. The resolution has become known as the Rumanian declaration of independence.

The Warsaw Pact's Reluctant Dragon

Consistent with the declaration of independence engineered by Dej, Rumania's current supreme Party and government boss Nicolae Ceausescu has made no secret of his opposition to the Warsaw Pact as well as to NATO. Both military alliances, he believes, should be dissolved. He opposes the existence of "military bases and military troops on the territory of other states," characterizing them as "anachronisms incompatible with the independence and national sovereignty of peoples or normal relations among states." He first made this statement on 7 May 1966 in an address at a Party meeting celebrating the 45th anniversary of the Party. Since then, he or his spokesmen have continued to voice similar sentiments on suitable occasions, simultaneously, however, expressing the communistically blameless sentiment that the Warsaw Pact is necessary as long as the aggressive NATO organization continues to exist. His position would seem to be: "denounce, yes; renounce, no." On the numerous occasions during recent months when the Soviet Union consulted with her Communist partners-in-crime -- Poland, East Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, but not Rumania -- to consider measures to be undertaken against Czechoslovakia, using Warsaw Pact matters as the official pretext for calling a meeting, Rumania did not hesitate to point to the incongruity, or illegality, of discussing Pact matters without her

participation. Rumania is also reliably reported as having objected to Soviet domination of the Warsaw Pact structure and as favoring rotation of command among member states. More prudent than Czechoslovak spokesmen, the Rumanians have not brought such views to public attention.

Rumania's strongest difference of opinion with her Warsaw Pact partners was aired on the occasion of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, 20-21 August. On 22 August, at an extraordinary session of the Grand National Assembly (parliament), Ceausescu unequivocally denounced the invasion:

"Our entire party and all Rumanian people regard the military intervention in socialist Czechoslovakia with deep anxiety. We deem it a flagrant violation of the independence and national sovereignty of the Czechoslovak Republic, interference by force in the fraternal Czechoslovak people's affairs, and an action which is in total contradiction with the basic norms of relations which must exist between the socialist countries and between the Communist parties, and with the very generally recognized principles of international law.

"The forces of the five socialist countries have entered Czechoslovakia without being called to do so by the country's elected legal and constitutional bodies, under the pretext of an appeal made by a certain group. It is a unanimously known fact, which is accepted in all international life, that relations between parties and states develop exclusively between their legal leaderships and not between groups or persons who do not represent anybody...."

Later the same day, the National Assembly passed a resolution containing the following:

"In accordance with these aims and as a result of the establishment of the aggressive NATO bloc, the Warsaw Pact organization was created, of which Rumania has been a member since its establishment. Our country has unwaveringly fulfilled and is fulfilling its obligations as a member of the pact, tirelessly attending to the strengthening of its defensive capacity and of its armed forces, guarding the fatherlands of the other socialist countries participating in the Pact. We deem that as long as NATO exists it is also necessary to maintain the Warsaw Pact organization. It is an instrument for the defense of the socialist countries against aggression from the outside, against an imperialist attack. This was, is, and will be the only reason for its existence.

"For no reason, in no case, and in no form can the Warsaw Pact organization be used or called in for military actions against any socialist country. The Warsaw Pact may be conceived of only as an organization of socialist states which are equal in rights, and therefore any action carried out in the name of the Pact and any military action carried out under its aegis must be the result of consultations and of unanimous common decisions of all the member states as stipulated by the treaty itself. The measures which violate these norms can in no way involve the Warsaw Pact as an organization or its member states."

Though Ceaulescu, as a master politician, used this occasion, like many others, as a device for gaining popular support otherwise hard for any Communist leader to gather (baiting the Russians is bound to be popular with the Rumanian populace), it still is a very strong statement.

Disruption of International Communist Unity

As if cultivating the West, defying Comecon supra-national planning, and denouncing the Warsaw Pact were not enough, Rumania has disrupted large convocations of Communist dignitaries.

Rumania has strongly opposed what she frankly labels Soviet attempts to impose Moscow policies on other Communist nations, parties or even organizations by the "majority rule" system of adopting a general party or policy line. Rumania has, instead, contended that participants in any international Communist meeting should agree beforehand to accept as binding only those decisions reached "unanimously" and to regard any other matters on which no unanimity was reached merely as "an exchange of views."

Thus, Rumania boycotted the All-European Communist Conference on European security in Karlovy Vary in April 1967, primarily because she felt it was being used by Soviets as a vehicle for asserting their dominance of the world Communist movement. Rumania has consistently preferred bilateral party meetings, finding these far more useful, and is generally opposed to multiparty meetings.

In late February 1968, the Rumanian delegation walked out of the Budapest Consultative Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties on the fourth day of its sessions, stating that the Rumanians had agreed to attend only on condition that there would be no criticism of fraternal parties. They also claimed that although they had come hoping to be able to have a free exchange of views with other CP leaders, they had found this to be impossible because the Soviets were only interested in having the meeting ratify Soviet plans to hold a World Communist Conference in Moscow in November 1968.

They then boycotted the first preparatory committee meeting, held in Budapest in late April, which was concerned with more detailed planning of this November Communist Conference, but sent an observer to the second preparatory committee meeting in June 1968, also in Budapest. The party attributed its change of heart to a "desire to contribute to the cause of the unity of the world Communist movement," but noted that it would "continue to insist on the position it had adopted earlier -- i.e. that attacks and criticism of any party ... present or absent, should be prevented."

Thus, the Rumanian role in the World Communist Conference, which is scheduled for 25 November in Moscow, and which the Soviets, incredibly, still apparently plan to hold, is problematical. If they are consistent with their basic positions of the recent past, they will not only boycott it but denounce it. If they somehow acquiesce in the convocation of the conference, even without participating in it as formal members or observers, the question will inevitably arise whether Rumania has voluntarily or involuntarily given up her role as the conscience of the Communist-dominated world to practice what it preaches concerning sovereignty of countries and pledges of non-interference in internal affairs.

Criticizing the Soviet Past

Of all the sins committed by the Rumanian Communist leadership, from its flirtation with the West, its revolt against Soviet economic subjugation, its harassment of the Warsaw Pact, to its disruption of Moscow's designs for world Communist unity under the Soviet aegis, the most galling may have been its criticism of the Soviets' historical domination of the Communist movement by the ostensibly innocuous device of criticizing practices followed by Stalin in the Comintern and the Cominform. Since the Soviets themselves have denounced various Stalinist deformities, it is not easy for them to condemn any other Communist Party's denunciation of Stalin's more obvious blunders.

On 6 May 1968, Nicolae Ceausescu criticized some of Moscow's past policies as having been opposed to the national interests of Rumania and implied that the USSR had annexed territories rightfully belonging to Rumania -- thereby launching an "international bombshell" at the Rumanian Communist Party's (RCP) 45th anniversary meeting.

In criticizing the Comintern's errors, he noted that in the fall of 1920 Rumanian socialists sent a delegation to Moscow to discuss affiliation with the Comintern. They objected to the Comintern's views of the situation in Rumania as a result of its "ignorance of the realities" in Rumania and "at the same time objected to the Comintern's interference in the establishment of the components of the leading organs of the RCP, deeming that this was the inalienable prerogative of the party itself." Ceausescu went on to note "the negative consequences of the

Comintern's practice of appointing the leadership cadres of the party, including the secretaries general, from among people abroad who did not know the Rumanian people's life and preoccupations.... If we remember that other leaders of our party were appointed in those days from the ranks of people who were not living in Rumania and did not know the country's social and political conditions ... we can realize what damage this practice did to the revolutionary struggle in our country during that period."

Deliberately offending Soviet sensitivity about the Nazi-Soviet pact, Ceaurescu then went on to criticize the 1940 Comintern directives addressed to the RCP which, "instead of appreciating the justice of the fight against the Hitlerite war," called for "intensification of that fight, criticized the Rumanian Communists for activity directed against German aggression and for their stand on defense of the national independence of the fatherland.... By arbitrarily putting fascist Germany on the side of the Soviet Union, the Comintern directive points out that the Rumanian people and working class are faced with the task of not allowing Rumania to be transformed into a bridgehead of England and France in a war against Germany and against the USSR." Ceaurescu went on to say, "These directives, which were contrary to the political line of the party and to the needs of the fight against fascism and Hitlerite aggression, provoked a deep confusion and disorientation in the party and for a time checked its activity, creating the danger of estranging from the party broad social categories and various political groups...."

Ceaurescu went on to say that "as far back as 1942, on the occasion on which the decision was taken to dissolve the Comintern -- at which our party was also present -- the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International pointed out: 'The solving of the problems of the workers movements of each country, considered separately, will, if directed from an international center no matter of what kind, meet with impassable obstacles.'" He criticized the creation of the Cominform as "having harmed the activity of the working class of various countries" and that "therefore, the cessation of the activity of the Information Bureau was a necessity imposed by life and by the economic and social-political requirements of the activity of the Communist parties." He strongly spoke against any "international center," stating that "life shows that no one can know better the economic reality, balance and distribution of power in one country or another, all the domestic and international political situations and the evolution of the latter, than the Communist party ... of that particular country. This is why they exclusively have the right to draw up the revolutionary strategy and tactics of the working class and the methods of struggle.... This right cannot be a disputed right; each Communist party is responsible to the workers' class to which it belongs...."

This "safe" method of criticizing the Soviet Union is quite transparently another way in which the Rumanian leadership puts its views on the importance of national sovereignty on record.

On more current relations, Rumania and the Soviet Union finally agreed in late May 1968 on a draft for a new treaty of friendship and mutual assistance, but reportedly not until after months of hard bargaining in order to eliminate some of the provisions which Rumania had not liked about the prior treaty. No details have yet become known about this new draft treaty, and it has not yet been signed, though it was to have been consummated during the past summer. It is to replace the 20-year treaty which expired in February 1968. How Rumanian disapproval of the invasion of Czechoslovakia will affect the fate of the treaty will be interesting to observe.

A final irritant to the Soviets must be Rumania's continuing effort to maintain a neutral position in the acrimonious Sino-Soviet dispute. This neutrality was endangered when Premier Chou En-lai attempted to use his visit to Rumania in June 1966 as a golden opportunity to attack the USSR in its very backyard. Rumania survived the embarrassment and since has tried to pay equal attention to both Peking and Moscow. And Peking excepts Rumania from the vituperation it pours on the Soviets and their other satellites.

What does it all add up to?

While one does not want to belabor the obvious, the reminder is in order that Dej's and Ceaurescu's Rumania is a strictly repressive society, a Communist dictatorship in the modern style, i.e., one in which the more brutal forms of repression of freedom can be dispensed with as long as the populace, which is overwhelmingly non-Communist or anti-Communist, does not threaten Communist Party's supremacy. (Some acute observers have noted that as the population loses hope of progress toward democracy, it becomes passive, so that the more brutal forms of repression are not needed.) Sovereignty and independence are desirable and virtuous, and Communist Rumania thus far continues to enjoy them, but these virtues are not to be confused with such concepts as democracy and individual freedoms. In respect to these latter desiderata, Rumania is still a backward nation, and there should be no hesitation proclaiming this fact. One seeks long and fruitlessly to find evidence of any genuine effort at democratization of domestic life. That there is an easement of arbitrary police brutality may be accounted a liberalization measure, but one that is common to many police states. In any case, it can hardly be called democratization.

While the account given in earlier sections above explains in part how the Rumanians managed to carve out their unorthodox position of independence of the Soviet Union, it may be worthwhile to speculate on the "why's" of the Soviet-Rumanian relationship in the interst of understanding the nature of the secretive and therefore often mysterious relationships prevailing in the Communist world.

In the first place it seems quite clear that the Dej-Ceausescu strategy for assuring continued and relatively trouble-free Communist dominance of the Rumanian nation and people is to appeal to their natural Latin antipathy to Slavic/Russian dominance. That one concedes Ceausescu and his cohorts are motivated by nationalism is merely to say that, like any political leaders, they would prefer, and in fact do strive, to rule their own roost (if they can) rather than lick the boots of a foreign master.

When one raises the question of why the Soviets put up with Rumanian but not with Czechoslovak obstreperousness there is no obvious or simple answer. Aside from shrewd Rumanian diplomatic maneuvering, which outwitted the Soviets and caught them in a situation where the usual means of coercion were apparently judged to be inappropriate at the time, the Soviets could not help but observe that, unlike Czechoslovakia, the virus of freedom had not infected Rumanian society and thus could not pass on to the USSR or the lesser Communist regimes. One can also point out that Rumania's geographic position makes it much less important strategically to the Soviet Union. But when all is said and done, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Rumania is a thorn in the side of the Soviet Union, balking its efforts to attain unity in the foreign policy of the Communist world and cohesion within the world Communist movement. One must be on the lookout for Soviet countermeasures, and military action; though the danger seems to have receded, it cannot be ruled out with any confidence. Now that the Soviets have invaded Czechoslovakia, also just as the tension seemed to have receded after the Bratislava conference, and contradicting the best judgment of some of the wisest outside observers of the Communist world, no one can assert with any confidence that the Soviets will not forcibly bring their maverick Satellite to heel. The maverick itself cannot be sure of Soviet intentions, and it will be instructive to watch in coming weeks and months whether Rumania will persist in its Soviet-baiting ways, or seek increasing accommodation in such matters as formalizing the new treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union and, especially, supporting the Soviet project of convoking a World Communist Conference in November of this year.